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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000476

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: RRT ERBIL: NAWSHIRWAN'S PLANNED ELECTORAL LIST
THREATENS KDP-PUK ACCORD

REF: BAGHDAD 430

Classified By: RRT ERBIL Team Leader Lucy Tamlyn for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is an Erbil Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) cable.

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: Former PUK Deputy Secretary General Nawshirwan Mustafa's announcement of his intentions to run an independent list in the upcoming Iraqi Kurdistan Parliamentary elections has forced another showdown between President Talabani and PUK Politburo "reformists" who objected to Talabani's proposed expulsion of Nawshirwan from the PUK. The prospect of a fractured PUK losing votes to a new independent list has also shaken up KDP-PUK relations. The leaders of both parties have profited from the current power-sharing arrangement, and a weakened PUK could undermine an alliance that has worked very well for both sides (and possibly dredge up old inter-party animosities). End summary.

Nawshirwan Shakes up the Status Quo

[¶2.](#) (C) Former PUK Deputy Secretary General Nawshirwan Mustafa let it be known in early February that he intended to run a separate list in the upcoming election for the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament, taking advantage of provisions in the Iraqi and Kurdistan Region electoral law that would allow him to run an independent list outside a formal party structure if he garners the 500 necessary number of signatures. According to his closest political ally, former PUK Politburo member Mohammad Tawfiq, Nawshirwan, the leader of the PUK's unofficial reformist faction (reftel), leaked his plan to the press in order to take the pulse of the public and the main political parties before making an official announcement. However, Tawfiq insists that Nawshirwan currently has no plans to create a new party.

KDP Threatens to Nix Joint Accord with PUK

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Nawshirwan's announcement brought a swift reaction from the KDP. According to press reports, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) threatened to back out of its agreement with the PUK whereby the two parties run a joint election list and equally distribute parliamentary seats between them. Having calculated that Nawshirwan would draw votes from the PUK, the KDP leadership apparently felt it no longer made sense for them to award the PUK with an equal number of seats.

Talabani Provokes Intense Opposition within PUK Politburo

[¶4.](#) (C) Confirming press accounts, Tawfiq told us that Secretary General Talabani moved to expel Nawshirwan from the PUK shortly after the KDP's warning, presumably to neutralize

the threat he posed to the accord. Multiple contacts in Sulaimaniyah have confirmed that Talabani's move provoked impassioned opposition from a group of four reform-minded Politburo members who are closely associated with Nawshirwan - Omer Said Ali, Jalal Jawhar, Mustafa Said Qadir, and Osman Haji Mahmoud. They gained a critical ally when they were joined (albeit temporarily) by PUK Deputy Secretary General Kosrat Rasoul Ali. All five Politburo members threatened to resign if Talabani carried out his plan to expel Nawshirwan. (Note: Our Talabani contacts claim that Talabani gave Nawshirwan the same ultimatum as before: work with Talabani on reform or leave the PUK. End Note) Unhappy with Talabani's leadership, they also repeated their long-standing demands for more transparency of PUK finances and truly democratic decision-making within the party. Press reports and contacts in Sulaimaniyah confirm that nothing final has been resolved, and the parties continue to hold meetings.

Comments

¶5. (C) Our Sulaimaniyah contacts lead us to believe that Talabani has apparently opted to quell the more immediate and serious threat --- internal rebellion. By taking off the table his decision to expel Nawshirwan from the PUK) at least for now) Talabani may have kept the Politburo intact.

Meanwhile, Talabani is continuing to hold a series of meetings with them over proposed reforms. But these meetings, too, may be seen as a tactic to buy more time. Only last October, for instance, the same four reformist Politburo members submitted a letter to Talabani demanding party reform, and while their demands received wide press

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coverage, the promised reform has yet to arrive.

¶6. (C) Kosrat's moves in this latest round are followed intently due to his political clout (and the presence of Pesh merga units loyal to him). That Kosrat genuinely supports the demands for reform is not clear; we believe it more likely that he joined with the other Politburo members for purely tactical reasons. It is likely that Talabani will find a way to continue to split Kosrat off from the other four with concessions.

¶7. (C) Nawshirwan's actions are consistent with his long-standing belief that the two-party KDP-PUK condominium is undemocratic and that a genuine political opposition is needed if the Kurdistan Regional Government is to become a true democracy. Indeed, he argued against the PUK forming a joint KDP-PUK government back in 1992, after the first elections in the newly established Kurdistan Regional Government, for the very same reason.

¶8. (C) Nawshirwan's list is very much a KDP problem - and not only because the new list could draw votes away from the KDP. The leaders of both parties have profited from the current power-sharing arrangement, and a weakened and divided PUK undermines an alliance that has worked very well for both sides. In addition, not far from people's minds is the fear that ending the agreement between the two major parties could dredge up old inter-party animosities.

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